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**STATE TO CONTINUE ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION OF MANUEL F.
CORRELLUS STATE FOREST BY REMOVING NON-NATIVE PINES**

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is planning to restore approximately 200 acres of non-native pine tree plantations in Manuel F. Correllus State Forest on Martha's Vineyard to native pitch pine and scrub oak habitat, as part of its continuing ecological restoration efforts in the forest.

DCR, with funding from the USDA Forest Service, has been working on the ecological restoration project using a wide variety of techniques designed to enhance biodiversity and reduce the risk of wildland fires (fires on open-space lands) in the state forest. As part of the effort, work includes the expansion and maintenance of fire lanes and fuel breaks, the restoration of native vegetation and rare species habitat, and the removal of non-native pine trees plantations.

DCR has been coordinating work at the state forest with a variety of project partners including the Martha's Vineyard Island Fire Chiefs, Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Harvard Forest, the Nature Conservancy, and the University of Massachusetts. Concerned citizens have also had input into the process via public meetings.

The next phase of the restoration project will involve the removal of non-native pine trees, originally planted to help develop a timber industry for the island. Approximately 200 acres in the southeast corner of the forest will be treated: the non-native trees will be removed, and indigenous trees and vegetation will be left to naturally reforest the area. Past experience has shown that this process can easily proceed unassisted, but if necessary, DCR will pursue further treatments to encourage the native plants to return. This restored pitch pine and scrub oak habitat will provide more living space for the wide variety of rare species that inhabit forests such as this on Cape Cod and the islands. The restoration will also address the susceptibility of the non-native pine plantations to high wind and hurricanes that have downed many trees in the past, resulting in increased fire risk and associated repair and clean-up costs.

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“This latest phase of the ecological restoration of Manuel F. Correllus State Forest will meet DCR’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program obligation to restore 200 acres of native habitat,” said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington. “It will also provide for rare species habitat, and ultimately help reduce risks of wildland fires on the island. It will be entirely beneficial for the state forest and for Martha’s Vineyard.”

Previously, this restoration effort had not been economically feasible. However, according to DCR Forestry and Fire Control Bureau staff, recent changes in market conditions have provided an opportunity to undertake restoration. In the coming weeks, DCR will solicit bids for the tree removal work. If the bidding process is successful, the work will be carried out at no cost to the taxpayers, and will take place this spring.

In addition to this restoration, the ecological restoration project in Manuel F. Correllus State Forest includes using prescribed fire to reduce dangerous fuel build-ups, removing dead and dying trees in areas that pose a threat to public safety, improving forest access for fire and safety personnel, and implementing a program to assist the public in reducing the risk of wildland fires on private property.

To date, the fire lane expansion portion of the project is nearly complete and work has been taking place over the winter to expand the fuel breaks in order to provide increased fire protection for adjacent private properties. These projects also contribute towards restoring native vegetation and increasing rare species populations.

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